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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KIVP](#) [KPAO](#) [BR](#)

SUBJECT: CAIRO FOLLOW-UP: POSSIBLE PROJECTS IN SAO PAULO

REF: A. SAO PAULO 421
[B](#). STATE 71325
[C](#). SAO PAULO 310
[D](#). SAO PAULO 542 (08)

[1](#). (U) Post has continued its Muslim engagement through a series of consultations in the wake of President Obama's June 4 Cairo Speech (Ref A). While much remains to be done, we have come up with a tentative road map of initiatives, starting with the simplest and moving to more complex, to increase engagement with Brazil's Muslim communities per request Ref B in coordination with our broader outreach program and diversity objectives.

[2](#). (SBU) In preparing this cable, a range of Arab and Muslim interlocutors were consulted (Ref A). From these and prior discussions, we have developed a range of ideas. We see each of these proposed programs as having appeal to non-Muslim as well as Muslim audiences and intend, wherever possible, to make our outreach efforts broad and designed for multiple constituencies. Brief descriptions of our proposals follow.

Consular Open House/Companion Social Event

[3](#). (SBU) There exists considerable anxiety about obtaining U.S. non-immigrant visas within the Muslim community and, according to Sheik Jihad Hammadeh, significant cynicism. Muslims whose applications are denied due to an inability to overcome 2154(b) of the NIA or delayed due to administrative processing often become convinced that their failure to get a visa resulted from political considerations. To allay these fears, build trust and to extend something of possible concrete benefit to the Islamic Community, we are working on setting up a Consular Open House, in which we would invite Muslim representatives to tour the Consular Section, prepare a presentation on the visa application process for them and then invite them to a social event afterward. The Consular Section is also eager to send out speakers to do information outreach to Muslim audiences as it does for other special interest groups, including business, universities and travel agencies, further allaying anxieties and multiplying our contacts in the Muslim community by providing useful, practical information for travelers.

Obama Presentation for Muslim Youth

¶4. (U) For several months, post has employed an Obama Outreach PowerPoint on the President's life that has proven highly popular with a wide range of general audiences (Ref C). We have proposed to our Muslim interlocutors that we could re-orient this presentation to emphasize the positive contacts that the President has had with various Muslim communities throughout his life. So far, the response has been positive. Fundamentalist Sheik Hammadeh said that such a presentation could work for other Sheiks (Ref A). Moderate Sheik Al-Boustani who teaches a 70-person Arabic language and Islam religious class responded enthusiastically, and offered to have the presentation done for his students. This kind of encounter would be an ideal way to grow our contacts with the Muslim community at a person-to-person level and to expand our reach into a sub-set of Brazilian youth, since many of Boustaini's students are younger generation persons.

¶5. (U) Using materials we have at Post, we could also offer a U.S. History-based presentation/panel discussion on "American Spirituality" or "U.S. Faith Diversity" that would talk about the wide variety of faiths represented in the U.S. and their impact on the development of the U.S. Such an event would be of interest to Muslims and non-Muslims, including evangelical Christians and others. Such an event would also have an integrating function, bringing together a wide variety of contacts and ensuring that our Muslim outreach had a multiplier effect with other groups. This could be a lead-in event to inviting down a prominent scholar of American Religion who could present on the same topic.

Publications

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¶6. (U) Muslim organizations in Brazil have some small-scale publications. We plan to inventory the publications and then consider programs to send editors and others to the U.S. and/or look to them as possible outlets for interviews with Mission personnel.

Greater Contact: Cyber and Personal

¶7. (U) Moderate representative Mohammed al-Zoghbi and Sheik Al-Boustani suggested that we should look to send representatives of the Muslim community to visit the United States and meet with Muslims and non-Muslims. We would propose sending such persons on visitor programs, who could return to Brazil and give talks on Muslim life in the U.S. Such presentations would counter myths and negative images about the United States.

¶8. (SBU) Another theme that a variety of our religious interlocutors emphasized, from fundamentalist to moderates, was their dissatisfaction with the scholarly level of Brazil's Muslims. They lamented the lack of Islamic learning in Brazil and the language barriers that make scholarly advance difficult (few knowledgeable Sheiks speak Portuguese and few Brazilians speak Arabic). Both fundamentalists and moderates saw the U.S. Muslim Community as more theologically advanced than their own and wanted greater contact. During his June 30 visit, SP Special Assistant Jared Cohen suggested to Sheik Jihad Hammadeh that Washington could help create cyber-spaces to facilitate communication with U.S. Muslims (Ref A). Post is looking at various options, which could include hosting webchats or linking Muslim communities here to counterpart communities in the U.S. Hammadeh wanted those contacts to be limited to Sheiks, though the cyber-forums would lend themselves naturally to a more free-wheeling kind of contact. To build sophisticated, flexible cyber-links between Brazilian and U.S. Muslim communities, Post would need Washington support.

A Strategic Visit by Religious Scholars

¶9. (SBU) As a longer-term project, we might also consider inviting a U.S.-based renowned Muslim scholar to visit Brazil along with other non-Muslim scholars and perhaps a younger

American Muslim accustomed to working the United States' multi-religious atmosphere. Such persons could become the focus of a conference or meeting aimed at Muslims and non-Muslims to discuss religious diversity in the United States, with a special breakout gathering for Muslims most interested in advanced theology. This might be undertaken first as an cyber meeting or as a multi-country program to save on costs. As noted in Reftel A, non-Muslim Brazilians regard our attempts our outreach favorably, so such an event should be designed to appeal to both Muslim and non-Muslim Brazilian publics.

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